DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 060 470 CG 006 852

AUTHOR Tangri, Sandra Schwartz
TITLE Occupational Aspirations and Experiences of College Women.
INSTITUTION Department of Labor, Washington, D.C.; National Inst. of Mental Health (DHEW), Bethesda, Md.
PUB DATE 4 Sep 71
NOTE 7p.; Paper presented at Annual meeting of American Psychological Association, Washington, D.C., September 3-7, 1971

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Females; *Occupational Aspiration; *Role Perception; Self Actualization; *Vocational Interests; *Working Women
IDENTIFIERS Semantic Differential Test

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses women who enter male-dominated professions, so-called "Role Innovators", and some of the personality and background characteristics of these women. Findings include that (1) Role-Innovators' mothers were more likely to be working and to have Role-Innovative professions themselves; although the daughters' aspirations and commitments were greater than their mothers'; (2) for Role-Innovators, the Motive to Avoid Success (Horner, 1968) was significantly and negatively related to the importance given to having opportunities for leadership in choosing one's occupation, suggesting that embarrassment over prominence, particularly among male colleagues, is a major source of Fear Success anxiety, rather than success per se; (3) in the self-descriptions on the Semantic Differential and in their reasons for choosing an occupation, Role-Innovators appear more individualistic, less conventional, more intellectual, and have more conflict over combining a career and marriage; and (4) Traditionals derive less satisfaction than Role-Innovators from their co-workers and much more of their job satisfaction from the salary and convenience of hours or location. (TA)

ED 060470

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

OCCUPATIONAL ASPIRATIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF COLLEGE WOMEN*

Sandra Schwartz Tangri

Today there is an increasing awareness of the sex-bias in our occupational structure. The most prestigeful and well-paid occupations are predominantly male, while nursing, clerical work, social work, elementary teaching, library work, and domestic work are predominantly female. Because of this pattern and the attitudes that go with it, women who do go into male-dominated professions like medicine, law, and university teaching, are crossing sex-role boundaries. I have used the term Role-Innovator to refer to college women who want to go into professions in which less than 28% of the occupants are women. This cutoff point represents the proportion of the total civilian college-educated labor force that is female.

To understand how these women differ from those going into traditionally feminine occupations, I selected a random sample of two hundred women about to graduate from a college in 1967** such that one-third were Role-Innovators, one-third were Traditionals going into occupations in which half or more of the occupants are women, and one-third were women going into occupations which were in between these categories.

There were significant differences in background and personality between these groups in 1967. In terms of background, mothers' characteristics were more important than fathers'. Role-Innovators' mothers were more likely to be working and to have a Role-Innovative profession themselves. Yet on the whole, the daughers' aspirations and commitments were greater than their mothers'. Only 14% of the mothers whose occupation was known were Role-Innovators, and 30% of the mothers were reported as never having worked since marriage, as compared to only one daughter who definitely

---

*Paper presented at the Symposium on "Women, Education and Occupation" at the Annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, Washington, D. C., September 4,1971.

**Most of these data were collected by the Michigan Student Study. I want to thank Dr. Gerald Gurin for his permission to use these data and for his valuable help during the course of this research. This research was made possible by N.I.M.H. Grant No. 5-F1-MH-30, 493-03, and Department of Labor Grant No. 91-24-69-47.

CG 006 852

did not intend to work and another 10% who said they were not sure whether they will.

The personality differences were also significant. Several new measures of performance motivation proved to be more predictive of Role-Innovation than the widely used nAch measure of achievement motivation. Two of these were derived from the woman's own open-ended description of the person she would like to marry. The first of these, "Implied Demand Character of the Wife's Future", or Wife's Demand, was a rating of the extent to which living with the husband so described would require from her effortful responses to major challenges, or would it involve little challenge, effort, or risk-- centering primarily around concern with security. Role-Innovators were significantly higher in Wife's Demand than Traditionals.

The second measure, "Demand Character of the Future Husband," or Husband's Demand, was a rating of the extent to which the man being described as ideal husband demanded of himself long-continuing effort, challenge, and risk-taking. Husband's Demand was significantly negatively related to Role-Innovation.

These projective measures of performance motivation are successful predictors of Role-Innovation because they contain no cues which would arouse the Motive to Avoid Success (Horner, 1968) but rather provide a stimulus for achievement fantasy which has the culture's seal of approval.

The combination of a low score on Wife's Demand and high score on Husband's Demand suggests a displacement of one's own performance motivation onto a more culturally appropriate target--one's husband-- and was more common among Traditionals than among Role-Innovators. On the other hand, for Role-Innovators, the Motive to Avoid Success was significantly and negatively related to the importance given to having opportunities for leadership in choosing one's occupation. This suggests that embarrassment over prominence-- particularly among male colleagues--is a major source of Fear Success anxiety, rather than success per se'.

In self-descriptions on the Semantic Differential and in their reasons for choosing an occupation, Role-Innovators appear more individualistic, less conventional,

more intellectual, and have more conflict over combining a career and marriage. Traditionals, on the other hand, appear to have more altruistic, affiliative, and security motives in choosing an occupation, and a more conventional and unintellectual self-image. Role-Innovators also expressed greater commitment to working at their chosen profession than did Traditionals.

Although these findings were valuable in themselves, predicting as they did to occupational aspiration, there was no way of knowing whether those aspirations would become reality. A follow-up study within a few years was intended to find out what was happening to these aspirations and why.

In 1969 and 1970 I was able to relocate 152 of these women (75% of the original sample), and about the same number from each of the original groups. Sixty-one percent of these women had married, 21% are mothers, 27% are in school or taking courses, and 74% are working. There are still group differences in the expected ways, based on the type of plans they had made in 1967. The Role-Innovators are somewhat less likely to be married, though if married, not less likely to have a child and be at home. They are more likely to be in school rather than working. As before, Role-Innovators still want fewer children and want them later than Traditionals.

When we score each woman's present major activity according to the same criterion used in 1967, we find fairly good stability in Innovativeness, but a general shift toward Traditional activities. Fifty-eight percent of the Role-Innovators are still Innovative, 78% of the Traditionals are still Traditional. The association between previous and present group designation is significant at the .001 level. But whereas only 7% of the Traditionals can now be classified as Role-Innovators, 30% of the Innovators' present major activity is Traditional.

Which of the variables which predicted level of aspiration, now predict to actual level of present Role-Innovation? Before reporting these results, it should be noted that some of the women who are now at home with a very young child, or working at temporary clerical or teaching jobs, or taking a Teaching Certificate or

Master's Degree, also have plans to do other things when their children are a little older, or they have earned enough money to go back to school, etc. Therefore, their present major activity is not always their ultimate aim. For instance, of the 46 persons who are not taking any courses now, almost half plan to go back for a Master's degree; thirteen plan to return for a doctorate, law, or medical degree. Of the 1970 Traditionals expecting to return to Graduate School, 37% want to enter fields with fewer than 30% women. Given present trends regarding women returning to school, these plans may no longer be dismissed as "unrealistic".

The background variables are not very strong predictors of present major activity. An index combining the mother's employment variables (total number of married years worked, whether working in 1967, and percent men in her occupation) ranks ninth in a group of fourteen predictors in a step-wise regression analysis, although it does still account for a significant proportion of the variance. What is puzzling, however, is its <u>inverse</u> relationship to the dependent variable. I'll come back to this.

A commitment index which combines the 1967 reports of intention to work after marriage, after having children, and how soon to return to work after having children, has also reversed its previous direct relationship to level of aspiration and is now inversely related to present Role-Innovation. Although it still accounts for a significant proportion of the variance, it ranks only tenth among the predictors of present Role-Innovation.

The explanation for both these results may lie in a changing pattern for some women who take returning to work or school for granted (partly because their mothers did so), and are therefore perhaps freer to take time out for family-building now. This interpretation is supported by the fact that when the dependent variable in the regression analysis is the <u>change</u> in Role-Innovation, the 1967 Commitment Index moves up to second best predictor.

The personality variable which is most predictive (negatively) of present Role-Innovation is Demand Displacement, which appears as the fourth best predictor in the regression equation. The best predictor is the first birth interval: the longer the interval between marriage and first birth, the more Innovative the woman's present activity. When this variable is deleted, the 1970 Commitment Index replaces it as the most significant positive predictor, and marital status is next best (negative) predictor: married women are less Innovative than the Engaged, these less than the women going steady, and these less than those who have no such commitments.

One of the areas that differentiates the 1970 Innovators and Traditionals most strongly is the group of items dealing with traditional roles, whether these have to do with actual behavior or with actual behavior or with expectations; Role-Innovators continue to show a greater willingness to postone the gratifications associated with domesticity : marriage, having children, and number of children wanted.

The other area that differentiates the two groups very significantly is "Having difficulties" in working or getting further education because of being a woman. Thirty-one percent of the Innovators as compared to 11% of the Traditionals report having such difficulties in pursuing further education: and twice as great a proportion of Innovators as of Traditionals report having such difficulties in working (42% and 21% respectively). One fifth of the entire sample say that they have been prevented from getting either jobs or training they wanted because of sex discrimination.

Most of the difficulties reported in education were discrimination in admissions policies, financial aid, discouraging and disdainful attitudes, or a combination of these. Only a few mentioned role conflicts or her husband's location or needs as obstacles. Most of the difficulties reported in working -- in fact 35% of all such reports--concerned discrimination in starting salaries

6,

promotions, and raises. Forty-seven percent of the Innovators and 29% of the Traditionals report experiencing this kind of discrimination. The next most frequent mention was the exclusion of women from whole categories of jobs (e.g., radio-TV announcers, writing and production, etc.). Eighty-three percent of these responses came from Role-Innovators. Only one Role-Innovator mentioned internal barriers, and one Traditional mentioned physical limitations which created difficulties for her in working.

These experiences as well as the general climate of opinion may account for the fact that 78% of the sample identify their position on women's rights as moderate or radical feminist, even though very few have actually participated in any activities.

Self-reports on changes in desire to work reveal some similarities and some differences. Of the 26 Innovators and 60 Traditionals who report an increase in desire to work, about an equal proportion of each group say it is because they like the responsibility, challenge or independence of their work (44% and 42% repectively), and about an equal proportion give "desire to prove myself" as the reason (36% of the Innovators and 29% of the Traditionals). Five persons in each group said because their husbands wanted them to work.

Over half of the Innovators and a third of the Traditionals say nothing has decreased their desire to work. Of those who do report a decrease in desire to work, marriage and children responsibilities are the most frequent reason, given mostly by Traditionals. Innovators, on the other hand, are more likely than Traditionals to give inadequate pay and lack of promotions as the reason.

There are also striking differences between the groups in what aspects of their job they derive the most satisfaction from, and these provide some additional validation for the personality data on Wife's Demand. Innovators are much more likely than Traditionals to derive their satisfaction from the fact that

their job is challenging, involves some risk-taking, and demands a lot from them "not just physically but in other ways as well". There is not much difference between them in "autonomy" as a source of satisfaction, perhaps because many of the Innovators are still in training.

What is more surprising, is that although Traditionals express greater affiliative satisfactions because they "work with people rather than things" (usually children), they derive less satisfaction than the Role-Innovators from the people they work with, that is, their co-workers. Perhaps Traditionals feel more comfortable in dominance-ordered relationships than in collegial relationships. Finally, Traditionals derive much more of their job satisfaction from the salary, convenience of hours or location, or other material conditions of work than do Innovators.